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AUTHOR Taylor, Tommie Nell
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ABSTRACT

Three critical factors in the Terrence E. Deal model for examining organizational climate and culture are values, rites and rituals, and communication networks, and these were assessed in a study of 80 graduate students to determine their perceptions of these elements in a university graduate program in Administration and Policy Studies (APS). The purpose of this investigation was to provide feedback to the faculty about the students' feelings about the climate and their understanding of the goals promoted by the APS department. The findings have direct organizational implications for the department. The students made excellent suggestions about ways to strengthen rites and rituals, and these could probably be strengthened by opening the reorganization process so that students could be included in the decision-making. Also, there was a strong feeling that communication of research efforts of the department was very weak. Future research is encouraged using a larger sample with a wider variety of age, sex, race, and nationality. References, statistical tables, and the survey used are included. (LMS)

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Effects of APS Reorganization on Student Climate

Tommie Nell Taylor

School of Education

University of Pittsburgh

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ABSTRACT

Effects of APS Reorganization on Student Climate

Tommie Nell Taylor

The Terrence E. Deal Model for examining elements in organizational culture is used to analyze student perceptions of these elements in a university graduate program. Deal suggests that there are four factors critical in the examination of organizational culture: Values, Heroes, Rites and Rituals, and Communications Networks (Deal, 1982). Values establish concrete standards of achievement within the organization: "If you do this, you too will be a success." Heroes are the personification of the culture's values and provide tangible role models for employees to emulate. Rites and Rituals are systematic and programmed routines that are instrumental in achieving the organization's standard of success. Formal and informal networks of communication that carry the beliefs and values that keep the culture alive are shared across levels and divisions of the organization. A strong culture is characterized by strong rites and rituals communicated through networks that affirm organizational values and promote organizational heroes. In understanding organizational structure and function, organizational climate refers to employee perceptions of norms, assumptions, and beliefs of organizational culture, whereas organizational culture refers to the beliefs, norms, and assumption promoted by the organization (Owen, 1987).

When organizational climate and culture are in synch, individuals feel that they 'belong' and make valued contributions to

the organization. Tommie Nell Taylor

There were 80 respondents completing individual surveys of items structured around three of four attributes of Deal's model of cultural attributes: Values, Rites and Rituals, and Communication Networks. While student climate on the dimension of Values is relatively congruent with goals promoted by the department, there is quantitative evidence of problems in Communication Networks and Rites and Rituals. The problems are identified in the quantitative section and student suggestions for correcting these problems are summarized in the qualitative section. The organizational, theoretical, measurement, and future research implications are discussed.

Effects of APS Reorganization on Student Climate

Tommie Nell Taylor
School of Education
University of Pittsburgh

In this paper the Terrence E. Deal model for examining elements in organizational culture is used to analyze student perceptions of these elements in a university graduate program. Deal suggests that there are four factors critical in the examination of organizational culture: Values, heroes, rites and rituals, and communications (Deal, 1982).

Values establish concrete standards of achievement within the organization: "If you do this, you too will be a success." Heroes are the personification of the culture's values and provide tangible role models for employees to emulate. Managers talk about these values openly and take a direct hand in choosing people to play these heroic roles (Deal, 1982; Sarason, 1971). These heroes, employee of the month or salesman or teacher of the year, affirm organizational standards of success in a public way. They are the embodiment of company values.

Rites and rituals are systematic and programmed routines that are instumental in achieving the organization's standard of success. Formal and informal networks of communication that carry the beliefs and values that keep the culture alive are

shared across levels and divisions of the organization. Rules regulating these networks promote relations between levels and divisons in behalf of these values. A strong culture is charac terized by strong rituals and rites communicated through networks that affirm organizational values and promote organizational heroes. A strong organizational culture enhances employee morale, satisfaction, and productivity (Deal, 1982; Kanter, 1983). In contrast, a weak culture impairs effective functioning of any organization (Kanter, 1983; Peters, 182; Schein, 1985).

In understanding organizational structure and function, an important distinction is drawn between organizational culture and organizational climate. Organizational climate refers to employee perceptions of norms, assumptions, and beliefs of organizational culture, whereas organizational culture refers to the beliefs, norms, and assumption promoted by the organization (Owen, 1987). Organizational culture and climate are related, of course, but problems in either of the relationships between them can lead to organizational problems in morale and productivity. Problems occur when the organizational culture is not supportive of organizational goals, when organizational climate is not supportive of organizational goals, or when organizational climate is at odds with organizational culture (Martin, 1983; Sarason, 1971; Smirchich, 1983).

When organizational climate and culture are in synch, Kanter argues that there is trust and value commitment between individuals and the organization. Individuals feel that they

'belong' and make valued contributions to the organization. In contrast, Kanter describes ineffective organizations as segmented, alienated. It is hard to take pride in such an organization because employees know little about it or what it is doing.

The purpose of this investigation is to examine the effect of APS reorganization upon three of four dimensions of organizational climate: Values, Communications Networks, and Rites and Rituals. The Heroic component was not evaluated because it is not an attribute systematically and explicitly codefied by the depart ment.

METHODS

Participants

Eighty students (39 females and 31 males) completed individual surveys: Of this number, 54 were part-time and 17 full time, and 17 reported working on Master's degrees, 15 on Ph.D. degrees, and 26 on special certifications, while 22 did not mark this item. Thirteen were in Administration and International Education; 5 in Policy Studies; 3 in Curriculum and Supervision; 6 in Social and Educational Theory and Policy; 3 in Instructional Leadership; 1 in Higher Education; 20 in Educational Administration; and 1 in Foundations.

Instrument

Items were structured around three of four attributes of Deal's model of cultural attributes: Values, Rituals and Routines, Communication Networks. The distribution of items by attributes of Deal's model is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Student Questionnaire Items Adressing

Three Attributes of Organizational Culture

VALUES

10. The courses are informative and challenging.

12. Quality of instruction is consistent with what I need.

RITES AND RITUALS

2. I feel we need a monthly brown bag or colloquium.

3. I feel we need to have a monthly social event.

8. My advisor provides what I need to plan my program.

9. I feel we have enough social events in APS.

COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS

1. I am aware of primary research interests of APS faculty.

4. My advisor is readily accessible.

5. I have not met many APS students.

6. I am aware of research projects in APS.

7. I need to meet other students in the department.

11. I feed I can talk with my advisor about academic concerns.

13. I feel I can talk with my advisor about personal concerns.

All items appearing in Table 1 were written by the investigator to operationalize estimates of student climate in relation to

three components of Deal's model of organizational culture. Each item was rated on a 1 to 5 Likert Scale by the respondents.

Procedure

The Questionnaire was completed by students enrolled in two administration and policy studies classes (N=40) and by other students who were solicited through informal contacts outside classrooms and in the halls (N=40). All were told that the questionnaire was supported by faculty and students who expressed interest in examining student perceptions of departmental reorganization. They were told also that their responses would be used as formative information in discussions at a faculty retreat to which the investigator and another student were invited. This survey was conducted in September, 1987 to gather student perceptions of organizational culture, and the preliminary results were shared the with faculty at a departmental retreat October, 1987.

RESULTS

Since there are rated items as well as student comments, the results were divided into quantitative and qualitative sections.

Quantitative Results

An analysis of reponses by item and category is presented in Appendix A. Means and standard deviations are reported for each item. The Appendix A data are condensed in Table 2, summarizing the percentage of students scoring below and above the neutral score of "3".

Table 2

Percent Below, At, and Above the Neutral Point on Deal's Model of Organizational Culture

Component	%Below	%At	%Above
Values	22	34	44
Comm Net	38	22	40
Comm Adj*	23	25	52
Rit & Ritu	26	37	37

*Comm Adj removes items 1 & 6 concerning research

By paying particular attention to the relative percentages of students scoring above and below the neutal value "3" on the Likert scale, it was felt that the direction of student feelings and opinions would be revealed directly. Student ratings are now considered for each of the three areas.

Values. Since 44% of student responses fell above the neutral point and only 22% below that point, it is clear that student climate on the dimension of Values is relatively congruent with values promoted by the department.

Communication Networks. In contrast to the Values component, 38% of the frequencies fell below the neutral point, while 40% fell above it. Inspection of the items indicate that the relatively high percentage falling below the neutral point is attributable to two items (1,6), both of which have to do with

student knowledge about research in the depart ment. For these two items, 75% percent of the frequencies fell below and only 12% above the neutral point. If frequencies from these two items are removed from the total frequencies of the Communication component, then only 23% of the student responses fall below the neutral point while 52% of student responses fall above the neutral point. Except, then, for student knowledge of research in the department, student climate on the dimension of Communication Networks accords with goals promoted by the department.

Rituals and Rituals. About 37% of student responses fell above the neutral point and 26% fall below it. Here, the frequency of responses falling at or below the neutral point is relatively high, 63%. Relative to the other dimensions, responses for this component tend to be flat to unenthusiastic. Of the three components, student climate for Rites and Rituals is least consistent with goals promoted by the department.

Qualitative Results

While quantitative results indentified the nature of problems within the department, qualitative results offer possible solutions to problems identified. Appendix B contains the full range of student comments sorted by the investigator into dimensions corresponding to Deal's model. An overview of students' suggestions for improving organizational climate is presented in the following pargraphs. Because of quantitative evidence of problems in Communication Networks and Rites and Rituals, students suggestions in these areas may be of particular

interest.

Values. The students suggested that they would benefit more from courses if theory and practice were better integrated, if smaller classes were offered at different times, if a broader range of courses were offered, and if special methods to improve writing skills of students were implemented.

Communication Network. The students suggested that communications would be enhanced by small group research projects involving students and a newsletter featuring faculty research and student-faculty research.

Rites and Rituals. In order to improve social relationship within the Department, students suggested having coffees, seminars with major speakers, and weekly socials for relationship building.

DISCUSSION

The results have organizational, theoretical, measurement, and future research implications.

Two findings have direct organizational implications for the department. First, the department should consider promoting rites and rituals that are esteemed by students and faculty. From student comments it is apparent that students have excellent ideas to strenghten rites and rituals in the department, exchange lecturers from other departments, weekly socials for relationship building, and so on. If the department were to open up the

reorganizing process to students, providing them an opportunity to participate in decision making, it is possible that recommendations generated would be more esteemed by students as well as faculty. Second, the strengthening of rites and rituals may be contributory to more efficient realization of department goals. The department should consider developing new strategies to inform students of departmental research efforts. Small group projects, round table discussions, a newsletter featuring faculty and student research and similar recommendations offered by students suggest the role they can play in enhancing organizational climate for research in the department.

The overall results are somewhat puzzling in light of Deal's theory of organizational culture. The theory suggests that communication networks and rites and rituals promote productivity (values), such that when values are held in high esteem communication networks and rites and rituals should be held in correspondingly high esteem. However, this is not the case here. Rites and Rituals and Communication Networks are held in relatively lower regard than Values. Failure to find consistency across components of Deal's model may be related to some unusual characteristics of the sample used, to a theoretical insufficiency in the model, or in the measure used to estimate the model. A review of sample characteristics summarized under Participants indicates that repondents in this study are demographically similar to the population of students in the department. It is unlikely, then, that the results are related to some unusual characteristic of the sample. Whether or not there is an insufficiency in the Deal

model must be deferred until deficiences in the current measure are corrected, a matter to which the investigator now turns.

The Values component on the questionnaire has 2 items while Rites and Rituals has 4 and Communications Networks 7. The latter two dimensions have from 2 to more that 3 times as many items, giving the respondents more opportunities to express their perceptions about these dimensions than Values. If the Value dimension were represented as well as the other dimensions, perhaps fewer responses would have fallen above the neutral point. To this degree the responses of the students to the values dimension could have been similar to those on the other two dimensions. If this were the case then differences between Values and remaining components in the present study would be attributed to deficiences in the measure. If however, desparity remained between value and remaining components after the measure was strenghtened then questions of the validity of Deal's Model or its applicability to the present settings could be raised.

Future research should entail administration of the revised measure to a larger student sample diversified by school and department affiliation and by student age, sex, credit hours, race and nationality. Then it will be possible to determine the effects of the preceeding variables on components of organizational climate. If it were possible to collect independent data on leadership style and policy or curricular change, the influence of these changes on organizational climate could be evaluated also. Studies such as these would permit a more comprehensive

opportunity to evaluate the validity of Deal's model within academic settings.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Quantitative Analysis of APS Student Questionnaire

	Mean (Standard Deviation) All (72)	Frequencies by Categories 1	2	3	4	5
VALUES						
10. The courses are informative and challenging.	3.43 (1.09)	6	6	18	20	10
12. Quality of instruction is consistent with what I need.	3.36 (1.11)	2	17	17	21	13
COMMUNICATION NETWORKS						
1. I am aware of Primary research interests of APS faculty.	1.90 (1.15)	34	20	8	8	1
4. My advisor is readily available.	3.59 (1.35)	8	8	8	20	24
5. I have not met many APS students.	2.84 (1.20)	9	22	20	13	8
6. I am aware of research projects	1.95 (1.11)	31	23	9	5	3
7. I need to meet other students in the department.	3.46 (1.16)	5	11	20	19	17
11. I feel I can talk with my advisor about academic concerns.	3.84 (1.14)	2	15	14	24	23

		Tommie Nell Taylor				
13. I feel can talk with my advisor about personal concerns.	3.21 (1.23)	7	7	25	18	11
RITUALS AND ROUTINES						
2. I feel we need a monthly brown bag or colloquium.	3.31 (1.27)	7	7	24	15	18
3. I feel we need to have a monthly social event.	3.11 (1.23)	10	7	27	18	9
8. My advisor provides what I need to plan my program.	3.21 (1.51)	11	11	11	23	12
9. I feel we have enough social events in APS.	2.74 (1.04)	12	9	38	8	4

Appendix B

Student Comments on How to Improve Organizational Climate on Three of Four Components of Deal's Model
(The number following each statement indicates the number of students endorsing that statement)

VALUES

Opportunities for internships -4

Opportunities for interdisciplinary study -2

Scholar/Practicum blend -2

Intro courses for inexperienced -1

Practical skills course for principals -2

Theories and practice should be integrated -3

No acceptable reason to use mid-term or final exams -1

Too many requirements -1

Structured programs with written sequence of courses for each -2

Professors need basic instructional skills to make courses interesting, practical. Lecturing is not an effective technique. -2

More independent study to integrate field experience of student with course work and theory

More Summer and Spring course offerings -5

More writing projects, less tests -2

More courses offered at different times -3

Smaller classes -3

Way to improve writing skills for professional journals -2

COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

Have advisors accessible in summer -4

Secure appointments with advisor through secretary -2

Calendar and catalog to describe required steps and process leading to masters, Ed.D and Ph.D. -1

Newsletter -5

Mail out registration for those who must travel long distances -2

Recommended course of study -1

Job possibilities at the end of the program -1

Mail and phone to inform students also central information spot -1

Advisors need to be informed about course of study and procedures -4

Dean and Chairman round table with prepared questions once per month -1

Advisors should be held accountable no cost to student if advisor errors -1

Small group projects involving students around research -2

Exchange ideas, lectures from other departments -4

Program should not have been implemented without complete clarity among students, faculty, and administration -4

RITES AND RITUALS

Not interested in social aspect -4

Coffees...seminars with major speakers -2

Weekly social for relationship building -1

Take 5-10 minutes before classes to get to know other students weekly -1

Pleased with opportunity to complete questionnaire -4

Wanted to have this opportunity again, since they only had 3 to 6 credit hours -8

OTHER COMMENTS

Simplify registration -2

Credit should be given to students who return after statute of limitation expires -1

Parking problems need to be solved -4

Environment to simulate:

Prelims
Comps
overview
final defense -2

A quiet area to study -3